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MW 708 Introduction to World Religions

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ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Spring 2004

MW708, MS674 Introduction to World Religions
Meeting Time: Tuesday, Thursday 1:00 – 2:15 **Room:**
Instructor: Terry C. Muck **Phone:** 859-858-2145
E-Mail: terry_muck@asburyseminary.edu **Office:** MC314
Office Hours: Wednesday 2:00 – 4:30 or as scheduled

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, students study the origin, history, and basic tenets of each of the major religious traditions of the world--Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism. Students learn basic religious study skills, and engage in research projects in one or more of these religions.

II. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

David S. Noss. A History of the World's Religions. Tenth Edition. New York: Prentice Hall Publishing Company, 1999.

Terry C. Muck. The Mysterious Beyond: A Guide to Studying Religion. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1993. (Get from instructor)

III. ASSIGNMENTS

1. Class attendance, participation, quiz
2. Four written exercises (10 percent each)
3. Read the texts
4. Two exams (30 percent each)

IV. CLASS SCHEDULE

Feb. 17- What is religion? Why study religion? Noss, Chap. 1. Muck, Chap. 1

Feb. 19 - Three Views of Religion (**Exercise #1** - A Three View Visit - Due March 11)
The Religious Studies Attitude; Quiz; Muck, Chaps. 2, 3

Feb. 24 - Hinduism: History
Noss, Chap. 3

Feb. 26 - Hinduism: Beliefs
Noss, Chap. 4

March 2 - Buddhism: History
Noss, Chap. 6

March 4 - Buddhism: Beliefs
Noss, Chap. 7

March 9 - Determining a Religious Studies Event
Muck, Chap. 4 (**Exercise #2** - Isolate An Event - Due April 15)

March 11 - Sikhism **EXERCISE #1 DUE**
Noss, Chap. 8

March 16 - Taoism
Noss, Chap. 9

March 18 - Confucianism
Noss, Chap. 10

March 23 - **EXAM #1**

March 25-April 6 - Reading Week Break

April 8 - How To Talk To Someone About Religion
Muck, Chap. 5 (**Exercise #3** - Interview - Due April 22)

April 13 - Roots of Western Religions: A Different View
Noss, Chap. 2; Muck, Chap. 6

April 15 - Zoroastrianism **EXERCISE #2 DUE**
Noss, Chap. 12

April 20 - How to Compare and Contrast Religions
Muck, Chap. 7 (**Exercise #4** - Compare/Contrast - Due May 4)

April 22 - Judaism: History **EXERCISE #3 DUE**
Noss, Chap. 13

April 27 - Judaism: Beliefs and Practices
Noss, Chap. 14

April 29 - The Question of Truth
Muck, Chap. 8

May 4 - Islam: History **EXERCISE #4 DUE**
Noss, Chap. 17

May 6 - Islam: Beliefs
Noss, Chap. 18

May 11 - Final Lecture
Muck, Chap. 8

May 13 - **EXAM #2**

V. EXERCISES

Exercise #1 - A Three View Visit. Write three, one page (typewritten, double spaced) descriptions of a religious service you have attended recently. One of the descriptions should be from the insider's stance, one from a reporter's stance, and one from a specialist's stance (for the latter, choose the viewpoint of the psychologist, the sociologist, or the philosopher). See Muck, Mysterious Beyond, pp. 31-43. Due March 11.

Exercise #2 - Isolate a Religious Event. Choose a religious subject of interest to you. Using the library, write a description of the time period of the subject (its beginnings and history, and what time period your study focuses on), the context of the subject (the role it played or plays in its culture), and the function and importance of the subject in its particular religious system. Four to five typewritten, double spaced pages. See Muck, Mysterious Beyond, pp. 59-69. Due April 15.

Exercise #3 - Interview. Interview a classmate or friend about a religious topic. Plan on a twenty minute interview, and then write up the results in a five page paper. Include in the paper a statement of the interview time, location, and subject, and a description both physical and biographical of the interviewee. End with a transcript or summary of the interview itself, in question and answer format.

The topic of the interview could be one of many different things. Consider the following set of questions, based on issues raised in James McClendon's book, Biography As Theology (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1990), as one possibility:

What are your main spiritual and theological images? (For example, if the subject is a Christian, you might ask her or him to consider Jesus: Is your mental image of Jesus on the cross? In Gethsemane? Preaching? etc.

How do these key images apply to your life?

How do your images apply to your religious community's life?

What parts of your religious tradition are most important to your spiritual life? Give examples.

What parts of your tradition are not so important to your spiritual life? Example?

Feel free to try some different approach to the interview.

See Muck, Mysterious Beyond, pp. 71-81. Due April 22.

Exercise #4 - Compare and Contrast. Do a religious studies comparison along the lines described in Muck, Mysterious Beyond, pp. 97-109. Four to five typewritten, double spaced pages. Due May 4.